

The Portland Harbor Community Advisory Group (PHCAG)

Assessment of 2003 Superfund Progress

A lot has happened this past year as the Advisory Group proceeded to tackle the tasks laid out before it. Our Mission is: To: ensure a Portland Harbor Cleanup that restores, enriches, and protects the environment for fish, wildlife, human health, and recreation, through community participation. The Portland Harbor Superfund is currently defined as the area between River Miles 3.5 and 9.2, but may be revised pending results of the ongoing Remedial Investigation.

Travis Williams stepped forward to lead as the initial Chairman and helped guide the group forward. By April the PHCAG had drafted a formal set of bylaws and elected Dorothy Shoemaker as secretary and elected Robin Plantz to fill the Chairman position.

Through this past year we experienced the frustration of watching the funding for cleaning up sites gutted. The initial loss of funding for cleanup of the McCormack & Baxter site, after \$20 million spent on the orphaned site, and with completion so close, left the community in an uproar. Only when Oregon Governor, Ted Kulongowski, beseeched President Bush was \$9 million dollars recommitted to the project. With these replaced dollars the process of designing the caps and the finish work will be able to proceed.

Also this year several agencies and groups offered jet boat tours on the river to bring individuals up close to the damages of the past deeds to the riverbanks. These tours included but were not limited to neighborhood groups, citizens, local representatives, public employees and local media. Tours of the Portland Harbor helped bring a more direct awareness to individuals on the issues surrounding cleaning up the river. This gave individuals the opportunity to become aware of the fact that not only in-water cleanup is necessary, but also that upland cleanup and source control are important components to the health of the Harbor. Outreach such as tours, open houses and media events have helped bring awareness to the community of the many stages and projects that are ongoing in an effort to improve our river and the surrounding areas. EPA has attended the PHCAG Meetings and in 2003 made presentations at the January, April & June Meetings. EPA declared that the pivotal Record Of Decision (ROD) is set to be made between RP's and EPA by the fall of 2006.

With the introduction of the PH 101 presentations the CAG has been learning about and discussing the cleanup process; how it's implemented and how decisions are made. The presentations have helped the members to have knowledgeable and lively discussions and put forward opinions and

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ideas that helped direct and move the cleanup process along. Travis Williams recently recommended that the CAG has moved past the PH 101 level and is ready to raise the bar; so starting in 2004 we will be scheduling more detailed presentations throughout the year. And with this in mind we will move on to PH 201. Some of the presentations we are scheduling for the coming months include the City of Portland's River Renaissance, Port of Portland's Early Actions, PDC Industrial Land Survey, DEQ Upland issues, DHS and the Combined Sewer Outfalls. CAG members have always been encouraged to submit topics for presentations.

Since Dorothy has taken on the role of coordinator for the Evaluation Committee she has scheduled several meetings for that committee to review the draft Work Plans that the LWG (Lower Willamette Group) has submitted to the EPA. This committee met several times amongst themselves, with DEQ, the EPA, outside technical experts and the LWG throughout this past year drafting positions and questions for the CAG to consider. These small group meetings and email discussions provided the CAG members with valuable time saving input and direction allowing the monthly meetings to be more a more effective use of limited time.

The non-profit group, Willamette River Keeper (WRK) has provided substantial support to the PHCAG, offering leadership, administrative and technical resources. WRK's toxicologist, Regina Skarzinskas, contracted through the \$50,000 Technical Assistance Grant awarded to WRK from EPA, has presented valuable interpretations of technical data at meetings in 2003.

Also this past year the PHCAG held it's first Press Conference at the BES Pollution Control Water Lab in Cathedral Park, in North Portland. Several CAG members, local media and the involved agencies attended the event with Travis Williams, who was the Chairman at the time, and Joe Keating leading the presentation and answering questions. A big thanks goes to Joe for putting this together as the Education & Outreach Committee coordinator. In this coming year there will be greater need for a more intense outreach effort. We will ask more members of the CAG to step up and help out. It is our task to engage more of the impacted communities into the cleanup process.

While the CAG has received less than \$500 in donations since it was formed, we have still been able to successfully pursue our mission through the dedicated efforts of our volunteer members. EPA reported it has incurred more than \$600,000 in expenses in the first 20 months of the process and the LWG reported it has spent \$11 million so far. Toyota reportedly spent \$4 million on improvements to its facility in the Superfund Area and the Port of Portland has allocated \$3 million for the T4 property, as part of an early action program. .

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As the CAG meetings moved forward several of the original members and participants came and left. Even though they have moved on to other activities it should be noted that their participation helped with the early formation and direction of the CAG. The current membership does not yet reflect the diverse impact of the Portland Harbor or the wide range of impact on our community. We still have room and a need for new members that we hope and expect will add more diversity to the group make up.

In this past year the CAG has reviewed, discussed and commented on the Lower Willamette Group's (LWG) Work Plan and Field Sampling Plan. The review, discussion and comments are still ongoing at this time. Barbara Smith, LWG consultant and the two co-chairs have made several power point presentations to the CAG, small group meetings and neighborhood groups encouraging discussions, questions and debates, always willing to listen. Through this open dialogue process we expect the CAG will have a direct, positive impact on this cleanup. There will be several other opportunities for the CAG and its individual members to help move this cleanup along, and we should encourage other groups and individuals to participate.

We are currently asking for more input from all the agencies, groups and organizations that are involved in this Willamette River cleanup process. Through the PH 101 presentations we heard from the DEQ, EPA, DHS, LWG, Port of Portland and NOAA, giving the CAG a chance to have knowledge building sessions and discussion time with those groups. So many new acronyms are used, it seems that we could hold whole meetings without speaking a single word of Standard English. The growth of acronyms seems proportional to the level of bureaucracy involvement. We have learned what the SOW might be from what the LWG is proposing after the ROD through the FSP and RI/FS and how it will drive the size of the ISA. The process will hopefully reach an ROA and start some actual cleanup work in the near future. And to think I always thought that a SOW referred to the bovine family, I hope this is not an omen.

Some goals the current CAG members have suggested include more information exchange between the CAG and the organizations and agencies that are involved (EPA, DEQ, Trustees and Tribes), more active community outreach, adding more cultural diversity to the CAG, and seeing more PRPs stepping forward to get involved. Currently, only the LWG, which represents a large number of private and public parties, has been actively engaged with the CAG.

The consensus is that our CAG members enjoy working with each other despite the struggles and frustrations inherent in this process. As our collective knowledge and experience grows our goals and vision for the successful outcome we pursue shall grow also. Through our lively discussions and small breakout meetings we expect to be able to focus more and more clearly on what we're shooting for and how we can achieve it. Each

of us has the opportunity to make a positive difference in our community. Only within ourselves do we limit our potential, our possibilities and our impact.

Looking into the New Year we will experience possibilities to make a significant positive difference through our individual and group actions. It will be up to each of us to rise to the challenges. As we look forward to these opportunities to work toward success, let's remember to reach out, embrace and enhance our surroundings.